

Closing remarks, International Trust Fund, April 18

Distinguished participants of the 11th Meeting of National mine action program directors and UN technical advisors,

On behalf of Mr Goran Gačnik, Director of International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, who due to urgent obligations is not able to attend the closing session, I would like to give the following closing statement.

First of all I would like to thank UNMAS, CROMAC and GICHD for carrying out and participating in this prominent meeting together with ITF. I believe that the meeting has born fruitful results.

ITF has been, on behalf of its donors, a part of a global effort to eliminate the scourge of landmines for ten years now. In these years we have all witnessed a remarkable improvement in solving the mine problem in terms of diminishing the affected areas, national capacity building and ownership, decreasing numbers of new mine victims and subsequent sustainable rehabilitation of once impacted communities not only in South East Europe but also elsewhere in the world.

In my opinion this kind of meeting presents a useful opportunity to review and benchmark ongoing processes taking place in the sphere of Mine Action. Throughout the meeting there were many issues expressed and addressed, many of them tackled successfully, other left open. I would like to point out and elaborate on some of them.

Firstly, with regards to national ownership I'm proud to mention that in the case of South Eastern Europe all Mine Action programmes are under national ownership. Mine action programmes in the SE Europe region differ from each other and are in their heart of the problem unique; each mine problem has been addressed through case by case approach and correspondingly. Affected countries, donor community and other actors have taken the responsibility and have been fulfilling the commitment in solving the problem. Moreover, through the regional cooperation and especially through South-Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council (SEEMACC) deficiencies of national programmes are being solved. Neighbours are helping each other to solve the landmine problem in the region.

Secondly, I stress the importance of further coordination among mine action stakeholders to realize the goal of a mine free world. Coordination and harmonization has to take place horizontally and vertically not only within the affected country or region but also among affected regions. The benefits deriving from this effort will result in synergies of actions, transfer of knowledge and know-how, cost-effectiveness of the programme expenditure and so forth.

Thirdly, mine action has been facing challenge of interlinking with other humanitarian and developmental processes in the world. This fact on one hand impacts on resource mobilization and continuity of mine action programmes, while at the same time claims a higher efficiency and effectiveness of national mine action programmes. We all have to strive towards the excellence.

In conclusion, on behalf of ITF, I would like to express my gratitude to the opportunity to co-organize this meeting and sincerely wish you a success in your endeavour of achieving a safer and more peaceful world.